

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 AGR-20 INT-08 DRC-01 /153 W

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R 031317Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9879

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 7724

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: LAND REFORM PLANS OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT

1. MINISTER OF LAND REFORM BELATE GEBRE-TSADIK MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS TO ME JULY 1 REGARDING GOVERNMENT'S LAND REFORM PLANS.

2. PRINCIPAL MEASURE WHICH IEG PRESENTLY PREPARING IN THIS FIELD IS DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT LAND TO LANDLESS PEASANTS. THE OLD SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTING LAND GRANTS WAS TERMINATED WHEN NEW GOVERNMENT TOOK POWER AT END FEBRUARY BUT NEW SYSTEM WILL PROBABLY NOT BEGIN UNTIL END OF RAINY SEASON, I.E., IN OCTOBER. DISTRIBUTION ENVISAGED WOULD COVER 10 CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN GOVERNORATES OF ETHIOPIA AND 250,000 FAMILIES, INVOLVING ABOUT 1,250,000 PEOPLE. ATO BELATE SAID THAT PLAN IS TO PROVIDE GOVERNMENT LAND WHICH IS NOT MORE THAN 50 OR 60 KILOMETERS AT MOST FROM PRESENT HOMES OF LANDLESS PEASANTS. HE CLAIMED SUCH LAND IS AVAILABLE. ONLY AT LATER STAGE WILL GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKE FAR MORE EXPENSIVE "RESETTLEMENT" PROJECTS INVOLVING TRANSFER OF PEASANTS TO AREAS FAR FROM THEIR PRESENT HOMES.

3. WITH REGARD TO A REDISTRIBUTION TO LANDLESS PEASANTS OF LAND WHICH WILL BE TAKEN FROM LANDLORDS WHO CANNOT PERSONALLY UTILIZE IT, MINISTER SAID THAT HIS MINISTRY IS STILL STUDYING THIS PROBLEM WITH A VIEW TO HAVING A DRAFT BILL THAT WILL GO BEFORE NEXT SESSION

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OF PARLIAMENT. TYPE OF COMPENSATION HE PRESENTLY ENVISAGES IS

LONG-TERM BONDS, PAYING 5-1/2 PERCENT INTEREST, WITH NO REPAYMENT OF PRINCIPAL FOR AT LEAST TEN YEARS.

4. ATO BELATE SAID THAT TENANT-LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP BILL IS NOT REGARDED AS HIGH PRIORITY PROBLEM AT PRESENT, SINCE DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT LAND WILL BE FAR MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF SOLVING TENANTS PROBLEMS. ONCE NUMBER OF TENANTS IS SUBSTANTIALLY LESS, IT WILL BE POLITICALLY MUCH EASIER TO PASS TENANT-LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP BILL.

5. WITH REGARD TO NOMADS, MINISTER SAID THAT PRINCIPAL THRUST OF NEW POLICY WILL BE TO INSURE THAT IN FUTURE A WHOLE AREA WILL NOT BE TAKEN FROM THEM WITHOUT ANY PORTION THEREOF BEING GRANTED THEM ON PERMANENT BASIS.

6. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION REGARDING REPORTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN RECENT MONTHS BETWEEN TENANTS AND LANDLORDS, ATO BELATE SAID THERE HAVE BEEN QUITE A NUMBER OF THESE BUT NOT NEARLY AS MANY AS ONE WOULD BELIEVE FROM RUMORS CIRCULATING IN ADDIS. HE ALSO SAID THAT TRADITIONAL TRANSFER TO LANDLORDS BY TENANTS OF A PORTION OF CROPS HAS NOT BEEN GREATLY ALTERED BY RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS.

7. COMMENT: SO FAR NEW GOVERNMENT HAS MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS EXPANDING ON WHITE PAPER DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED LAND REFORMS (SEE ADDIS 3957). EVIDENTLY IEG INTENDS USE GOVERNMENT LAND GRANTS AS PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENT IN BEGINNING TO REVISE LAND TENURE SYSTEM. PROPOSED DRAFT BILL ON LAND REDISTRIBUTION (SEE PARA 3 ABOVE) LIKELY AROUSE EVEN STRONGER OPPOSITION THAN DID TENANT-LANDLORD BILL LAST PARLIAMENTARY SESSION. WE NOTE THAT LANDLORDS, E.G., IN ARUSAI AND SIDAMO, INCREASINGLY WORKING TOGETHER IN ORDER PROTECT THEIR POSITIONS. IEG'S PROPOSED COMPENSATION SCHEME NOT LIKELY STIMULATE VOLUNTARY TURNOVER OF LAND. MINISTER'S STATEMENT RE TENANT-LANDLORD LEGISLATION SEEMS MORE REFLECTIVE OF REALITIES PARLIAMENT/LANDLORD OPPOSITION THAN CABINET'S WHITE PAPER.
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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 03 JUL 1974
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